

What Do You Think?

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Command Chaplain

When we were stationed in Okinawa, there was an American who lived there and sold insurance. I don't remember what company he represented, but I do remember the sign he had on the side of his car. It read, "When you think of me, don't think about insurance, but when you think about insurance, think of me." I thought that was a pretty good way to approach it.

There are some times that some of our regular members miss Chapel services. I will usually mention once or twice that I miss them and hope to see them in the service again soon, but I don't often pursue it beyond that point. I don't ever want people to dread seeing me show up because they know I am going to pester them about church attendance. Honestly, I would rather they come because they have a desire to be there, not because it is a way of getting me off of their back.

Part of what is involved is my concern over how people perceive me. I don't want to be seen as only concerned in chapel attendance. I want people to see me as genuinely concerned for them as human beings. I suppose that deep down, we all want to be liked and I feel like if I am pushy about church attendance, people won't like me as much.

Recently, I read an article in a minister's vocational periodical about how various churches are perceived by the community around them. One pastor began asking the question, "What do people think about when they think of our church?" Strangely, many of the other pastors in the community were not at all interested in even asking the question. They felt that they knew how the church was seen and were perfectly content with their current knowledge.

I think it is a good question to ask. However, you have to be prepared to listen to the responses. I heard a long time ago, "Don't ask a question unless you are prepared to live with the answer." But it is important to ask the question and then, not just live with the answer, but to do something with the answers. We take the responses and learn how we are perceived and why. If we are seen as we feel we need to be, fine. But we need to be prepared to change what we are doing and how in order to make sure that the public has a correct image of us.

If we want to be seen as a place where people can come and find meaningful solutions to life's problems, we need to be sure our actions and teachings reflect that. Basically, we are trying to ensure that the customer's expectations of us are consistent with our abilities, efforts and mission statement. This is where we take feedback and make sure we are conducting our mission.

I will ask the question because I really do want to hear the answer. What do you think of our Chapel? Are we relevant to your life? How can we more effectively meet your needs? When you think of our Chapel, what thoughts go through your mind? Please let us know. You may call us at (229) 639-5284 or email us at SMBMatcomChapel@matcom.usmc.mil. We really do want to hear from you.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.